

*Peacebuilding: War and Conflict in the
Modern World*
by Dennis J.D. Sandole

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Originally envisioned in former United Nations Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali's *Agenda for Peace* 'peacebuilding' expands the concept of peacekeeping beyond the basic cessation of hostilities and looks towards forming a positive (rather than negative) peace. Implied in this effort is the development of non-security sectors of a state or region that are potential catalysts for renewed conflict. This is a bold undertaking which, among other objectives, can include rebuilding damaged infrastructure, repairing broken intercultural relationships, establishing a functional judicial system, stimulating an economy, and sometimes even creating a whole new government. However, one does not need to look very far to see the difficulty in implementing such goals. The dramatic examples of failure that mark attempts to create lasting peace in states such as Somalia, Haiti, and Sudan display the need to challenge existing approaches to both understanding and resolving the issues of war-torn states.

Peacebuilding: War and Conflict in the Modern World provides a highly analytic and idealistic contribution to conflict studies literature. It attempts to provide policy-makers, analysts, and academics with the necessary framework for identifying and solving global conflicts. The

author, Dennis J.D. Sandole, deals with ‘peacebuilding’ broadly defined, including any conflict intervention that seeks not only to establish peace but to ameliorate the pre-existing ‘deep rooted causes and conditions’ (p.10). As such, Sandole emphasizes the complexity and difficulty of achieving peacebuilding goals and the necessity for a coordinated, multi-track, and preventive solution.

The book initially addresses the problem of conflict resolution from a theoretical standpoint. In the first chapter, Sandole presents peacebuilding as conflict transformation, the ultimate goal in a hierarchy of international security efforts to maintain peace and stability in a region. The next chapter then examines relevant analytic models for conflict analysis. Among others, the author critically evaluates the Prisoner’s Dilemma, Dugan’s ‘Nested Paradigm,’ and Diamond and McDonald’s multi-track framework. He synthesizes them into his own Three Pillar Framework, which simplifies conflict analysis into three main categories including ‘conflict elements, conflict causes and conditions, and conflict intervention’ (p.56).

The second half of *Peacebuilding* examines these models in the context of real conflicts and proposes possible solutions to them. Chapter three, ‘Improving the record,’ discusses the history of peacebuilding and looks at two institutions which have played a direct role in its development: the United Nations and the European Union. Sandole’s record of UN action focusses on the 1995 UNPREDEP (United Nations Preventive Deployment Force) mission in Macedonia. This was the only preventive deployment mission by the UN, and, in the author’s view, is exemplary of an international effort to change the fabric of a conflict before it begins. Using a broader example, Sandole suggests that the transformation of

Europe from a war torn continent to a peaceful and prosperous union is the epitome of successful peacebuilding, going so far as to characterize the EU as the closest thing to Immanuel Kant's 'perpetual peace.' Chapter four, 'Peacebuilding and the "global war on terror;"' considers terrorism as an 'epiphenomenon of deep-rooted conflict' and as a problem of failed peacebuilding (p.107). The author examines the emergence of terrorist activities from structural violence in failed states and suggests some potential solutions based on his own 'Three Pillar Framework.' Finally in chapter five, the author attempts to connect the preceding thoughts by looking towards the future of peacebuilding and the critical relationship it has with the United States.

Sandole's theoretical understanding of models for conflict resolution is apparent and rigorously articulated. However, his proposed solutions may be too idealistic. Take, for example, his "theory" on negotiating with terrorists' (p.126). In four parts, it includes opening direct or indirect channels for communication with terrorist organisations, attempting to induce cognitive dissonance regarding self-sacrificial behaviour, presenting options of less lethal means of accomplishing their goals, and finally changing US foreign policy towards one of persuasion. Assuming the first and last objectives are possible (opening lines of communication and changing US foreign policy), the second and third objectives rely on convincing terrorists that they are wrong in their methods and thought processes – a position which seems at best overly optimistic and at worst naïve.

A second example is Sandole's idea for restructuring international mechanisms for peace and security. Presented in the

final chapter of *Peacebuilding*, he suggests a 'Union of Unions' or 'Global Union of Democracies' to act as a new form of global governance meant to coordinate international and regional peacebuilding efforts (p.156). However, why there is a necessity for a new institutional structure that lies somewhere between regional organisations and the UN is not clear. Professor Sandole wants to mimic the success found in the EU but does not suggest how this will create a better or more efficient peacebuilding system. He ignores the immense practical and political hurdles of attaining state support for such processes and consistently relies upon a normative assumption that 'global interest is national interest and national interest is global interest' throughout his analysis (p.5 and p.184). This position is inherently contested in international relations theory, and is open to critical objection.

Finally, Sandole's analysis of future United States involvement in international efforts to create peace relies too heavily on the change in foreign policy rhetoric from President George W. Bush to that of President Barack Obama. He optimistically assumes that the shift of political power in Washington will lead to more than just elevated talk. Though Sandole was writing long before some of the more critical junctures of Obama's presidency, one can not help but wonder if his opinions about the current administration would remain so optimistic in light of the humanitarian intervention in Libya, the economic sanctions towards Iran, and the targeted killings of Osama bin Laden and Anwar al-Awlaki. At best, these events display a conflicting desire on the part of the United States to act multilaterally.

Irrespective of the above criticism, however, Sandole is

certainly right about one thing: unilateral attempts to solve the most complicated and deep-rooted problems of the world are doomed to failure. Without more communication, evaluation, and cooperation on the part of states and international organisations to understand and implement peacebuilding strategies, little lasting change can be made. *Peacebuilding: War and Conflict in the Modern World* thus effectively conveys a plea to the international community to unite in finding more permanent solutions to both reoccurring and newly emerging global conflicts – a noble goal amidst the challenges of an increasingly complex world.

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